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## The Help Company Provides Trustworthy Household Help

May 16, 2013 | By **Sue Pascoe**, *Staff Writer*



When not working, Claudia Kahn, owner and founder of The Help Company, takes a chef class at The New School of Cooking.

Finding nannies, personal assistants and help that you can depend on is a challenge, and fraught with potential problems. Just ask Meg Whitman, whose 2012 campaign to become California's governor was seriously compromised when it was revealed she had employed an undocumented worker for nine years. Whitman should have contacted Claudia Kahn, owner and founder of The Help Company, which has offices in Brentwood, San Francisco and New York. Kahn and her team provide high-quality housekeepers, nannies, personal assistants, chefs, elder care and estate managers.

"We interview people five days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and at the end of the week, we're lucky to have found two or three people that we'll place," Kahn said. "It's insane the number of people a week we interview, but you'd better be

selective if you're charging people."

Kahn said that before she sends a helper to a home, she prefers that this person have two or three references and two to three years in those former positions. "There are new people who are wonderful who might be good, but I'm only using people who are proven," she said, noting her company also uses a private investigator to check out people new to the company.

Once a match is made between the employer and the new hire, The Help Company receives 15 percent of one year's salary for a nanny and 20 percent of the salary for other positions. The Company also requires confidentiality agreements, has a lawyer available to negotiate the contract and puts clients in touch with Breedlove and Associates, a nanny tax service that provides payroll management and tax filing.

A recent job listing specified: "Assistant Needed to Travel the World!"

"A super fun young actress/ recording artist needs a top-notch assistant to work both in Los Angeles as well as on tour from August 2013, through March or April 2014. Pay is negotiable and in the \$60,000 range. Only SEASONED assistants need apply, as our client really needs an assistant who understands what the job is so he/she can hit the ground running."

Kahn said that although the company has many high-profile clients, it also has working couples who are not wealthy but are seeking reliable childcare.

Living in Beverly Hills is 1881 to Kahn fell into the business in a roundabout way. She hired a babysitter from a well-known domestic employment agency to take care of her six-month old son while she went to a wedding, but when she called from the event and heard her son crying in the background, she immediately went home.

"I found the woman [babysitter] dead drunk on my living room floor," Kahn said. "I'll never forget it." Kahn realized that parents needed an agency where helpers were properly vetted, were legal and could drive. In 1982, with seed money from her parents, she started Baby Buddies.

"That was before the term 'nanny' was commonplace," said Kahn, who grew up in Ohio and attended the University of Arizona. She had planned to move to San Francisco in 1976, but on her way stopped in Los Angeles and happened to meet her first husband.

By the time her son Andrew was three, Kahn was a single mom. (Andrew is now 31 and founder of G.E.M.S., a music business that pairs bands and music with brands for advertisements.)

Before opening her business, Kahn went to Sacramento and immersed herself in labor laws. And from day one, "The phones were ringing off the walls."

In 1994, to meet the demand for personal assistants and chefs, Kahn changed the name of her company from Baby Buddies to The Help Company and branched out.

Today, her company also has a service ("The Help Company Club") whereby a client who pays \$350 annually can call up the agency and request help, such as a chef or a butler, just for the night. The client pays the help directly, but does not have to worry about the caliber of the people coming into the home, because they all have been properly vetted.

Kahn and husband, Anthony Foux, live in Brentwood and have two adopted rescue dogs, Dylan and Maggie.

Visit: thehelpcompany.com or call (310) 828-4111.

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